



Vaccination Guidance for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Persons

TO: Local Health Departments, Vaccine Providers, Community Partners

SUBJECT: This guidance is to affirm and supplement the January 6, 2021 **Guidance Affirming Non-Discrimination in Medical Treatment, Including Administration of the COVID-19 Vaccine.**

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) reaffirms the need for the health care community to ensure clear, effective communication, including availability of interpreter services that is accessible and meets the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

IDPH, in collaboration with the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission, is pleased to announce the availability and distribution of the **COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card** to the health care community. The card was designed to help Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind persons communicate with COVID-19 vaccine providers during an appointment.

More than 2 million individuals in Illinois have mild to severe hearing loss. The State, local health departments, and health care providers are encouraged to continuously reassess their efforts to meet their obligations to communicate about and to administer the vaccine in an ethical, non-discriminatory, fair, and equitable manner. This includes removing barriers to inclusivity and to make sure that information, supports, and services are accessible to all. Ensuring full access to and participation in the COVID-19 vaccination process for as many Illinois residents as possible is an essential first step toward ending the pandemic.

Procedure for utilizing the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card

- Make copies of the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card available at vaccination sites including, but not limited to, front desks or waiting areas, vaccine rooms, drive-by vaccine sites, and other areas where vaccinations are administered.
- Ensure that the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card does not replace the requirement of effective communication to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind persons.
- Each individual has their preferred mode of communication. Ask the Deaf or Hard of Hearing person what mode of communication works best for them in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

- If neither a sign language interpreter nor assistive listening device is immediately available, individuals may choose the alternative option of using the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card to communicate with you.
- Illustrated graphics or texts of the COVID-19 vaccination process were developed based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Vaccination Recommendations and Guidelines. Some graphics or texts on vaccination process, including pre-screening information, may not be available in the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card. It is the vaccine provider’s responsibility to ensure that additional information is accessible to hearing loss individuals.
- There may be additional communication needs for individuals, including, but not limited to, DeafBlind Individuals who use Pro-tactile American Sign Language, a communication method rooted in touch; Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals who do not utilize American Sign Language or other sign languages; Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals with limited English proficiency; and documented or undocumented immigrants who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind.

Helpful Resources and Materials

- The **COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card** is available for the public to download and print from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission websites. Individuals may wish to print the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card and bring it to their vaccination site. Get cards from the IDPH website at <http://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/deaf-hardhearing-deafblind-vaccination-guidance> or the IDHHC website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/idhhc/Documents/COVID-19%20Vaccine%20Communication%20Card.pdf>.
- For communication tips with Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind persons during the COVID-19 vaccination process, visit the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission’s COVID-19 Resources at <https://www2.illinois.gov/idhhc/Pages/COVID-19-Resources.aspx>

In collaboration with the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission promotes education and awareness of the legal requirements for effective communication. The COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card does not replace the requirement of federal and state laws for effective communication to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind persons, such as sign language interpreters or other services.